

The Power of Music in Ritual and Remembering

BY JOHN EVANS

American culture has become less engaged in and less appreciative of traditional Catholic rituals and practices with respect to the dying process, death itself, burial and memorialization. Worse, but related, our same culture is less receptive to traditional practices even when the Church and religion are not involved. Put most simply, our hurry-up culture urges us to expedite, maximize effectiveness, minimize inconvenience, and above all, economize.

Yet we know there is age-old wisdom to the very deliberate and respectful pause in human activity which draws attention to the death of a fellow human and celebrates what has occurred in life. Add our belief in the Resurrection, and we truly have something to celebrate, even as we cannot avoid the pain of loss here on earth.

This is where music comes in to play. Music is potentially a tremendous healing resource for us all when we are experiencing the pain of loss and need to be able to acknowledge that pain, express it, reach out through it and use it to shape the lives we still must lead.

Let me suggest the following thoughts about the power of music, based on my years of experience as a musician:

- Intertwined with culture and human experience, music is absolutely essential to human ritual, and liturgy in particular.
- Music speaks to multiple senses; it evokes memories and feelings.
- Appropriate music can heal, soften, diffuse, calm and focus during times of sadness and stress.
- In grief and in memorializing, it is often the single most important personalizing aspect of ritual for the bereaved.

For Christians, it is said, "singing is twice praying."

We have wonderful guidance from the Church in the form of *The Order of Christian Funerals*, which challenges us in no uncertain terms to adopt an attitude and practices of extraordinary compassion and ministry to those who grieve. The Catholic Cemeteries' core values and very intentional long-range vision call for precisely that sort of commitment to ministry. Creative uses of music, well-chosen and well-delivered, are recognized as important resources in that commitment.

For example, on Memorial Day, 2008, at the dedication of the Children's Memorial and Prayer Garden at Gethsemane Cemetery in New Hope, the ritual included inspirational music beautifully done by Mark David Williams, evidence of the time and care taken outside of cultural norms to celebrate, to grieve and to turn loss into ministry for the benefit of all. Williams' music was not all strictly "religious," but was highly respectful, moving and appropriate. Preliminary planning is underway to hold similar musical events at Gethsemane in the future.

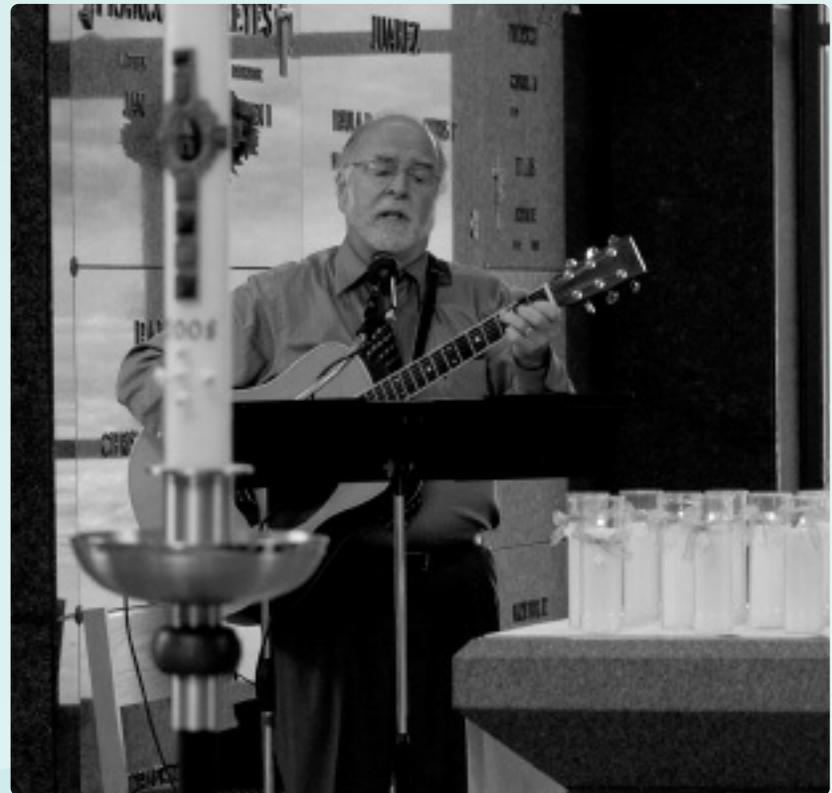


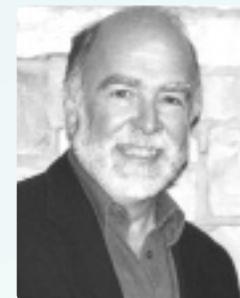
Photo courtesy of the Catholic Spirit.

Musician John Evans has performed at a number of special services hosted by The Catholic Cemeteries.

Another example is the ongoing ministry at Resurrection Cemetery for families who have lost children before birth. In both the chapel prayer and graveside rituals, music is emerging as great benefit in healing. Likewise, at the Masses and prayer services offered at both Resurrection and Gethsemane throughout the year, those who share the bereavement journey are offered the opportunity to reflect and pray in word and carefully-chosen song. There is great strength, consolation and gratitude in memory to be drawn from these gatherings.

In so many ways, as these examples show, The Catholic Cemeteries is committed to creating ministries that are alive with compassion and responsive service to the bereaved. The very deliberate, thoughtful and expanded use of music in memorial and committal rituals is a powerful component of its vision.

John Evans, a member of St. Mary of the Lake in White Bear Lake, is a lifelong professional musician who has over 35 years of involvement in church music, ministry and leadership at multiple church levels. His experience includes thousands of musical engagements, civic and non-profit work, retail business, sound contracting and consultation. Evans is one of several musicians involved in ministries of The Catholic Cemeteries.



STAFF PROFILE

Her work with families draws on her own experiences with death

As a family service counselor at Calvary and St. Mary's cemeteries, Susan Dillard assists survivors as they cope with shock, grief and sadness surrounding the death of someone they loved.

Calling her position "one of the most fulfilling things I have ever done," Dillard says the roots of her vocation can be traced to a life-changing experience in her teens — and to one later in life.

"My dad died when I was just 17. As the oldest child in the family, I had to help my mother with all the decisions that had to be made. We were so busy taking care of all the details. It was very stressful," she said.

Dillard went on to a career in social services for Hennepin County. After a number of years, feeling burned out, she decided to switch gears and train as a gemologist. While she enjoyed working in the jewelry industry, she had a nagging sense that something else lay ahead.

One day, she and her siblings were invited by her stepdad, who was seriously ill, to sit in on a meeting to prearrange his funeral and burial. She was the only one of her siblings who attended; afterward, the funeral home representative took her aside. "You need to be doing this kind of work," he told her, to her surprise.

Her stepdad passed away soon afterward, and Dillard was struck by what a different experience it was from her father's funeral and burial.



Susan Dillard, family service counselor at Calvary Cemetery and St. Mary's Cemetery.

"It was like night and day. This time everything was taken care of. We were able to spend time with our out-of-town relatives looking at photos, talking and laughing, really celebrating my stepdad's life," she said. "I thought, if I can share this gift with others, this is what I want to do."

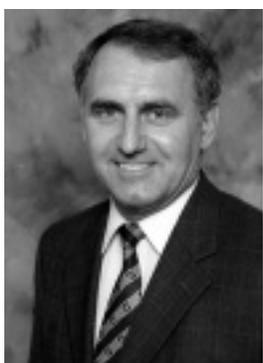
Dillard went to work for a St. Paul funeral home and then joined The Catholic Cemeteries in 2007, helping families with burial arrangements both at the time of death and in advance through pre-planning.

"This is like a ministry to me," she said. "There's nothing more rewarding for me than when I get a phone call, a card or a hug of appreciation from a family I've helped during this most difficult period of life."

Q&A

The Timeless Properties of Granite

Long a desirable construction material and more recently popular for kitchen countertops, granite is the stone of choice for contemporary cemetery monuments and memorials. Monuments offered by The Catholic Cemeteries include those made



Jim Schiffler
Monumental Sales, Inc.
St. Cloud, MN

of granite quarried in the St. Cloud area, one of the country's major granite-producing hubs. In an interview, Jim Schiffler of Monumental Sales, Inc. in St. Cloud, which designs, produces and installs monuments for The Catholic Cemeteries, talked about the timeless properties of granite and its use in cemeteries.

What exactly is granite?

Granite is a tough, durable rock composed primarily of three different minerals. These minerals are easy to see due to their different colors. The white mineral grains found in granite are feldspar. The light gray, glass-like grains are quartz, and the black, flake-like grains are mica.

How was granite formed geologically?

Granite formations started millions of years ago as large, hot masses of magma or molten rock under the earth that cooled, condensed, hardened and pushed up towards the earth's surface. In Stearns County, outcroppings of these Pre-Cambrian rocks are found in a 10 square-mile area mainly between St. Cloud and Rockville. Colored granite deposits were discovered here in 1868, which gave St. Cloud its nickname of "The Granite City."

What distinguishes granite from this area?

The color of granite varies by region. In the St. Cloud area, we are known for the range of pinks and reds and both light and dark gray granites. Granite is also found in shades of green, brown, black, amber and blue.

Why is granite the preferred material for a cemetery monument or marker?

Granite stands the test of time. In the past, markers were made of marble or limestone, which are softer materials. In many old cemeteries, you can see how names and dates have worn away over time. Granite does weather but very slowly — about the thickness of a single sheet of paper every 250 years. Another factor in granite's

popularity is the advent of power tools which make working with this very hard stone much easier and cost-effective. When the tools were just hammers and chisels, the work was more labor-intensive and more expensive. And granite, whether polished or in its natural state, is simply beautiful.

How do you approach the creation of a cemetery monument?

I believe every person has a story, and a monument is a way of telling it. I see that as our job, to help families tell the particular story of their loved one. With modern diamond tools and laser technology, a monument can be very personal. For example, actual photos can be etched on the surface. Families can choose granite monuments in different shapes, such as hearts, crosses or benches. And they can choose from a variety of colors.

In your experience, why is permanent memorialization of a grave so important?

I've seen many times how a family's involvement in the creation of a monument brings comfort and healing. It is an expression of their love that they can literally touch in a very permanent way.

Updates...

CEMETERY HOURS | Every day of the year, cemetery grounds are open from 8 a.m. to dusk (generally 5 p.m. in the winter). All cemetery offices are normally open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and on Saturday, 8 a.m. to noon at Resurrection and Gethsemane.



Photo courtesy of the Catholic Spirit.

Parents, siblings and grandparents attended the September 27 service of committal at Resurrection.

Under the guidance of Sr. Fran Donnelly, director of LifeTransition Ministries, the committal service has been expanded to provide bereaved parents with a more holistic and meaningful experience.

On September 27, more than 30 parents, siblings and grandparents attended a prayer service in the Resurrection Chapel Mausoleum, conducted in the presence of the fetal remains. The service included readings from Scripture, songs and music by John Evans, and a memorial ritual in which parents were given a candle to take home. Later, at the burial site in the children's section, the committal prayer of the Church was celebrated, songs were sung, flowers were placed near the containers, and, at the end of the service, the containers were gently placed into the ground. Families were then invited for refreshments served by volunteers from St. Peter's Parish in Mendota Heights.

The response from the families was positive and appreciative. Some stated that they felt like their pre-born children had had a respectful and dignified funeral and burial and that brought them great consolation. Resurrection Cemetery is now planning to continue to host these services on a quarterly basis.

Resurrection Cemetery hosts special service of committal

As part of The Catholic Cemeteries' ministry to parents who have lost children by miscarriage or other reasons prior to birth, Resurrection Cemetery has provided burial of fetal remains from area hospitals in the infant section of the cemetery. This practice is in partnership with Gill Brothers Funeral Homes, Fairview Hospitals and St. Joseph's Hospital in St. Paul.

Markers of CSJ sisters replaced at St. Mary's Cemetery

Over the summer, at the direction of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet (CSJ), approximately 65 grave markers at St. Mary's Cemetery were removed and replaced with new ones on the graves of their sisters who were buried in this cemetery in the early 1900's. The cemetery staff enjoyed working with the sisters on this project, which reflects their dedication to honor their saintly dead.

Improvements at Calvary Cemetery

Through the generosity of donors to the John Ireland Tree Fund, twelve trees were planted at Calvary Cemetery to help replace mature elms that had died over the past few years. Also, Section 80, located in the back of the cemetery, received a turf renovation. The three acres of grass in this section had been decimated by the drought in 2007. Several hundred markers were leveled and reset in the process.

YOU ARE INVITED...

Special Masses of Remembrance will be celebrated at Gethsemane Cemetery and Resurrection Cemetery on Saturday, December 6, 2008. Invitations will be sent in mid-November. For more information, contact the respective cemetery office at Gethsemane or Resurrection.

UPDATE:

LifeTransition Ministries

Over the summer, representatives of more than 30 parishes in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis took part in sharing sessions hosted by The Catholic Cemeteries as part of its new effort to assist parishes in ministering around issues of death and dying.

Sr. Fran Donnelly, B.V.M., director of LifeTransition Ministries at The Catholic Cemeteries, said the sessions, composed of pastors, pastoral ministers, liturgists and other parish workers, generated valuable insights and ideas that will help shape the resources to be developed for parish use. She has also been meeting with groups of BeFriends and Stephens Ministers from some parishes to assist them in their ministry to the bereaved.

"Our goal is to partner with parishes as they minister to families before, during and after a death occurs by providing practical end-of-life resources," she said. "These sessions were an incredibly valuable opportunity for us to listen and learn."

In the sessions, parish representatives said they would welcome assistance from The Catholic Cemeteries in such areas as funeral rites, bereavement and the Church's teaching on burial and death-related issues.

Sr. Fran said The Catholic Cemeteries will create a comprehensive resource tool, accessible in print and online, that would provide information, suggestions and background materials for parish use on the range of end-of-life issues.



Sr. Fran Donnelly met with members of St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Maple Grove.

She also said those who attended the sessions expressed gratitude for the chance to come together and talk with their peers. "We hope to host periodic sessions for parish representatives for networking and support on this important parish ministry."

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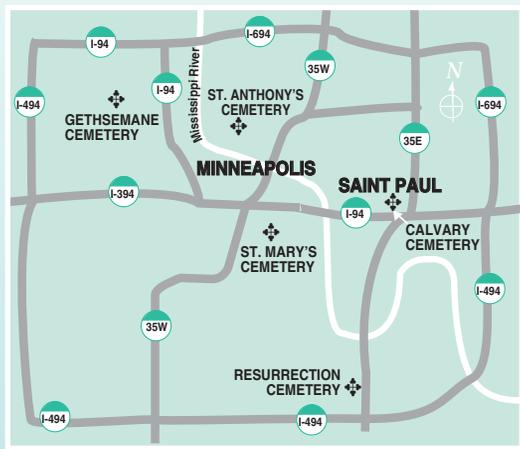
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GETHSEMANE CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL

Grandparents remember a special boy

The moment H. Earl Jarchow learned of the new Children's Memorial and Prayer Garden at Gethsemane Cemetery in New Hope, he knew he wanted his beloved grandson to be remembered there.

Van Edgar Jarchow was just 11 years old when he was killed in a tragic traffic accident in Wisconsin in 2006. "He was just a wonderful boy," said Jarchow.

"Last spring, I read about the Memorial in the *Heritage* newsletter or maybe it was the *Catholic Spirit*. I talked to my wife and we immediately agreed here was a perfect opportunity to do something."

At the Children's Memorial, families are invited to memorialize a child of any age with an

inscribed paving brick placed along a border leading to the Memorial plaza. Dedicated in May 2008, the Memorial was designed and funded by Don and Linda Warner of Eden Prairie in honor of their daughter Angela, who died of cystic fibrosis at the age of 21 in 2003.

"I envisioned a welcoming environment of peace and tranquility that would be available for any parent or family member who knows the enormous loss of a precious child, now and in years to come," said Don Warner.

Gethsemane Cemetery already had special meaning for the Jarchows

— Earl's mother is entombed in the Chapel Mausoleum, and Earl and his wife and other family members own crypts there as well.

Now a paving brick inscribed with Van's name rests not far from his great-grandmother's niche.

"Our friends say the pain of losing a child never goes away," said Jarchow. "But we are very happy we did this. It's a way to remember a special boy."



Van Edgar Jarchow and his grandmother, Sally Jarchow.

Our Appreciation

Our thanks go to those listed below for gifts given between October 1, 2007 and September 30, 2008 to the donor funds of The Catholic Cemeteries.

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Heritage

is published by The
Catholic Cemeteries
of the Archdiocese of
Saint Paul and Minneapolis,
2105 Lexington Ave. S.,
Mendota Heights,
MN 55120,
651-228-9991,
John Cherek, Director.